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# PRESS RELEASE

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United States Attorney Michael A. Battle announced today that the United States Attorney's Office, in conjunction with the United States Marshals Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, officially transferred 900 Genesee Street, Buffalo, New York, a 17,000 square foot commercial building to Hananiah Lutheran Ministry, a outreach organization of the Lutheran Church.

The United States of America began forfeiture proceedings against 900 Genesee Street on January 21, 2003, after an investigation was initiated by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration into a massive marijuana trafficking organization operating in the City of Buffalo. The investigation led to the arrest of the four individuals, including the former owner of 900 Genesee Street, Howard Klumpp. This criminal organization used the property on Genesee Street exclusively as a place to grow, manufacture, store and prepare for the distribution of the hydroponic marijuana throughout Erie and Niagara Counties. DEA agents reported that it was probably the most sophisticated and high-tech grow operation they had seen to date. Over 1,000 marijuana plants were taken from the premises.

On May 28, 1993, Harold Klumpp was arrested and charged with Criminal

Possession of a Controlled Substance in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree in violation of New York State Penal Law Section 220.16. On November 18, 1993, he pled guilty in Erie County Court to Attempted Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the 4<sup>th</sup> Degree in violation of New York State Penal Law Section 110-220.09. On January 10, 1994, he was sentenced to six months incarceration and 5 years probation. Immediately after the property was forfeited, the United States of America and local representative of CLIMB Ministries began discussing the transfer of the property from the United States to the Hananiah Lutheran Ministry.

CLIMB is an agency which is well known in the City of Buffalo for providing excellent services to families and the community both in faith based programs and in every day living. Hananiah Lutheran Ministry, which is led by the Reverend Kenyatta T. Cobb, realizes the benefits of providing safe, organized, and properly staffed programs to help children, adults, seniors and families overcome the everyday problems of the destructive life forces that exist in our community today.

900 Genesee Street will be renovated and used by Hananiah Lutheran Ministry as a community education center, after-school activities, as a place for workshops and as a place for social events and celebrations.

Said United States Attorney Battle, "the transfer of 900 Genesee Street is truly a perfect example of how the Department of Justice's Federal Asset Forfeiture and Weed and Seed Programs work effectively in betterment of our communities and neighborhoods. If it were not for the federal civil forfeiture laws, this property would still

be in the hands of criminals and used for the shipment and sale of marijuana throughout Western New York.”

“However,” continued United States Attorney Battle, “the federal government was able to move quickly and decisively against this property and shatter the hub of an illegal enterprise that dealt in massive amounts of marijuana. The criminal defendants, who were motivated by greed alone, cared little or nothing for the neighborhoods and communities they poisoned with their marijuana trafficking organization. However, through the provisions of the Department of Justice’s Asset Forfeiture and Weed and Seed programs, the federal government was able to take this property and remove it from being the center of a drug trafficking network, and in its place establish a wonderful community center to be operated by the Hananiah Lutheran Ministry.”

Resident Agent in Charge Nancy Cote’ of the Drug Enforcement Administration indicated “We are thrilled to be able to facilitate the transfer of this property to Hananiah Lutheran Ministry.”

United States Housing and Urban Development Regional Director Stephen T. Banko also hailed the transfer of the property as a great step in direction of inter-agency cooperation and community and goal oriented policing. Said Director Banko, “This transfer represents the continued commitment of HUD working hand in hand with other law enforcement agencies to utilize the federal asset forfeiture program to effectively transfer this property to deserving community and faith based organizations to better our neighborhoods. Normally such a transfer occurs through a local police department,

however, in this case, where no local agency was involved in the underlying investigation, HUD officials were able to accomplish this task. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department of Justice on other real property transfer projects in all 17 counties that make up the Western District of New York.”

United States Marshal Peter A. Lawrence added “This transfer represents the direction law enforcement is taking today, which is one of agency cooperation and community and goal oriented policing. This transfer represents a solid outcome of a critical law enforcement investigation. It is an investigation that both the law enforcement officers who conducted it and the community it effected can look upon with pride and a sense of accomplishment. There may be no better way to achieve justice than by convicting the drug dealers and taking their profit and property and give it back to the very neighborhood or community it infected and plant the seed for positive growth and development. I know the Hananiah Lutheran Ministry will plant this important and lasting image of positive growth and development in this community.”

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